

Questions and Answers for School Leaders

Media coverage of AYP

The media often cover stories in terms of extremes (i.e. the highest, the lowest, the most, the least). That said, the media will most likely contact schools and districts with a very high number of schools not making Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). They will also emphasize schools that have very few or no buildings on the list. Superintendents, principals and school board members may be called upon to respond to questions about why their school(s) or district did not make AYP or are identified for improvement.

Possible questions from the media

Q: Are you aware that, because of the federal law, XX number of schools have been identified in your district as “failing”? What’s your reaction to this?

A: I am familiar with the schools identified in need of improvement. I am working with my board/superintendent/principals to identify and address the needs in these schools/district. Reading and mathematics are the cornerstones of any education, and we must find ways to help all of our students succeed in these subjects.

Q: Why does your school district have XX buildings in need of improvement when XX school district has none/many? Why did your school/district do so much better/worse than XX school/district?

A: I only have first-hand knowledge of my own school/district. At this time, I think it’s important for me to focus on the needs of the students and staff in this district and find ways to help them meet their needs.

Q: How have your parents reacted to news that several of your buildings are failing?

A: Our parents have always been concerned about student growth and learning, even before the use of AYP to chart school/district progress. We continue to welcome their input and questions. We count on parental support and involvement. It’s a critical part of the school improvement process.

Q: Your school district has no buildings identified on the list of failing schools. Why are you doing so much better?

A: Every district faces its own unique challenges and issues. Our district, like every district in this state, is working hard to do the very best for all children.

Q: What changes will you be making as a result of the AYP information?

A: (Here you can provide an overview of current and planned initiatives, noting improvement strategies that are underway: “Our district has already been heavily involved with school improvement strategies and that focus will become even stronger within school buildings that did not meet AYP goals.”)

Q: How will you respond to parents who want to know why your building needs improvement?

A: We are making every effort to communicate with parents and community members about the programs we have in place to address student learning needs. We will also be trying some new approaches to help target students who may need additional support. We plan to communicate this information in a variety of ways, including through newsletters, parent conferences, open house events and periodic letters home.

Q: Will you be making any staff changes as a result of this information?

A: We will continue to base our staffing decisions on student needs, budget issues and a variety of data we have gathered.

Q: Your district just passed a large measure to pay for your new facility/facility improvements. What will you say to your community now that you have failing schools?

A: We recognize we have (a) school building(s) in need of improvement based on AYP criteria. We also know that the technology improvements, better heating and ventilation systems and new state of the art classrooms will have a positive impact on student achievement. The community’s funding for this measure is a critical part of our overall improvement process.